

WASHINGTON – Today, GOP members of the Committee on House Administration sent the following letter asking their colleagues to support H.R. 2360, which prescribes real and reasonable election reform, and oppose H.R. 811, which has been deemed a ‘cumbersome monstrosity’ by election officials from across the country:

Dear Colleague:

We are writing to ask for your support of H.R. 2360, the “Voter Enhancement and Security Act of 2007,” that we introduced as a realistic approach to election reform. Our bill, which has the same objective as H.R. 811, the “Voter Confidence and Increased Accessibility Act of 2007,” would require an independent voter-verifiable trail with state audit requirements. However, unlike H.R. 811, our bill places the responsibility of establishing election standards where it belongs; on elections experts, NOT politicians.

Over the past several weeks, we have received overwhelming opposition to H.R. 811 from state and county election officials from over 35 states; and from the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD); the National Conference of State Legislatures; the National Association of Counties; the Information Technology Industry Council; and countless other organizations from across the country. As a result, we have put together a bill that includes a realistic time frame for states to implement voting equipment and audit requirements, and preserves the valuable gains made by the Help America Vote Act (HAVA).

How H.R. 2360 Will Work:

- Directs the Election Assistance Commission (EAC), with the help of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), to establish state guidelines for a contemporaneous, independent, auditable, and voter-verifiable record.
- Protects the right for individuals with disabilities to vote independently and privately without physical assistance.
- Requires that state auditors certify state vote audit plans to ensure that state

procedures are effective and transparent.

- Requires that states develop contingency plans and emergency ballot protocols to ensure voting continues in the event of an Election Day emergency or voting equipment malfunction.

Why H.R. 811 Won't Work:

- With only 18 months until the 2008 General Elections, H.R. 811 forces election officials to meet unrealistic voter-verifiable paper audit trail (VVPAT) requirements, a goal that election officials have assured us cannot be met.

- H.R. 811 disenfranchises disabled voters by requiring these voters to use VVPAT technology that is currently not available, certified or ever used in an election in the United States.

- Places unrealistic requirements on states by mandating that they administer audits of at least 3% of precincts after every federal election unless a candidate wins by 80% or runs unopposed.

- Opens access of sensitive, security-related voting machine software to a broad spectrum of parties, causing serious security threats and violating intellectual property rights.

H.R. 811 will not only roll back the progress made through the enactment of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) by disenfranchising disabled voters, but it will also jeopardize the successful administration of our 2008 General Elections by imposing under-funded voting machine and audit requirements that would be impossible for states and localities to meet.

A recent letter from The National Conference of State Legislatures and the National Association of Counties sent to Committee members stated that H.R. 811, "would exacerbate, rather than assist states and counties in addressing these challenges, which could lead to disastrous unintended consequences in the 2008 presidential elections."

Advocates for H.R. 811 have pointed to a CRS memo on the production capacity

of machine manufacturers, calling the machine provisions “completely doable.” However, a letter issued in response to the CRS memo, one of the country’s leading machine manufacturers, Diebold, questioned the accuracy of the memo citing its failure to take state testing and implementation procedures into consideration.

We have repeatedly affirmed our agreement that there is a need for a redundant, auditable, and voter-verifiable trail. However, we also believe that deference should be given to state and local election experts, and not Washington politicians, on the methods by which this is achieved. This one-size-fits-all approach in H.R. 811 undermines the ability of states to determine what voting systems meet their needs, and presumes that the federal government knows more about what the states need than the states themselves.

Developing the HAVA legislation was done with a bipartisan, bicameral effort. HAVA was reported out of Committee on a truly bipartisan vote of 8-0. On the other hand, H.R. 811 was rammed through Committee on a party-line vote of 6-3, with no serious consideration of the 12 amendments offered by Republican members, and insufficient input from election officials. Election reform isn’t now, and should NEVER be a partisan issue.

American voters deserve a bill that will work and can increase voter confidence. H.R. 811 is NOT that bill. We urge you to oppose H.R. 811 and support H.R. 2360.

For more information, please contact the Committee press office at (202) 225-8281.